Description of English and Modern Greek nominals

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the derived nominal formation in English and Modern Greek; nominals are characterized by their hybrid noun-verb nature (cf. Comrie and Thomson 1985) and more specifically by the fact that some of them, just like verbs, can express actions, processes and resultant states, and also, just like verbs, they have argument taking properties. As we shall see, some of them appear to have a similar Argument Structure (AS), though not identical to that of a verb. On the other hand, however, nominals seem to exhibit certain anisomorphism compared to the verbs they are derived from, as far as their argument realization is concerned in the sense that an external argument in the AS of the verb (i.e. the subject), which is always obligatory in the verb's syntactic structure, becomes something which looks more like an Adjunct in the argument structure realization of the derived nominal, as we shall see. Notice in passing that there is a similar case with Modern Greek verbs, too, that is, there too, the NP subject behaves like an adjunct. Compare (o Janis) trexi, where the NP subject o Janis is optional, with the ungrammatical *(John) is coming. This has led to the conclusion that phonologically realized grammatical subjects in Modern Greek function as adjuncts (as the ‘subjects’ of nominals do) given that it is the verb endings (e.g. Sg: -o 1st p., -is 2nd, and -i 3rd; and Pl: -ume 1st, -ete 2nd, and -un 3rd) in which subject function is reflected.

The present paper will attempt to probe into the syntax and semantics of nominals and will try to show that the syntactic behavior of nominals crucially depends on their distinction into two semantic classes, i.e. action/process/event nominals, on the one hand, and result (concrete) nominals, on the other. But most importantly, we will show that there are some non-trivial differences (apart
from the similarities) between English and Modern Greek derived nominals, which any comparative study of those two languages should account for.

1. THE PRE-'REMARKS’ ANALYSIS OF NOMINALIZATION

Before the seventies, there was only one way for transformational grammarians to express the relation between a sentence and its nominalized counterpart. Thus, a nominal expression like:

(1) The king’s departure

derived from a clause whose underlying phrase marker was:

(2)

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S
  NP
  | Art
  | The
  | N
  | king
  | Aux
  | ed
  | VP
  | V
  | depart
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In Chomsky’s (1970) seminal work, however, it was claimed that the process of nominalization, which relates pairs like the ones below, was *lexical* and not the outcome of the transformation referred to above. Before we go on to elaborate on this discussion we will offer a short list of verbs and their derived nominals from English and their Modern Greek translational equivalents (MGte):

(3) a. destroy → a.’ destruction (3’) a. katastrefó → a.’ katastrofi
   b. develop → b.’ development b. anaptisso → b.’ anaptiksi
   c. execute → e.’ execution c. ektelo → e.’ ektelesi
d. exterminate → d.’ extermination d. eksoloürevo → d.’ eksoloürefsi
e. describe → e.’ description e. periýrafo → e.’ periýrafi
   f. express → f.’ expression f. ekfrazo → f.’ ekfrasi
g. translate → g.’ translation g. metafrazo → g.’ metafrasi
   h. adapt → h.’ adaptation h. prosarmozo → h.’ prosarmoyi

Now going back to our discussion, we will point out that the transformational analysis was proved to be wrong on two counts. On the one hand, assigning a common source for the two related constructions (1) and (2) did not take into account the syntactic differences between the N and V categories. By transferring the problem of expressing the N-V relationships to the lexicon, a bold
step was taken towards reassessing the importance of the role that the lexicon was about to play. What Chomsky did, in fact, was to prove that verbs and their derived nominals share lexical entries which are neutral with respect to lexical category (cf. Rappaport 1983). Indeed, contrary to the traditional notions of grammar whereby a verb ‘denotes action’ (e.g. act, destroy, execute, exterminate, etc.) whereas nouns ‘denote entities’ (e.g. table, chair, house, ship, etc.) there are cases when nouns, just like verbs, do denote actions, e.g. action, destruction, execution, extermination, etc.

Chomsky went further to claim that the argument structure related to a verb is similar to that of a corresponding noun (e.g. destroy → destruction) via a common stem, i.e. destr-, and also that there were obvious selectional similarities (see below) which can be hardly captured in any other way.

Furthermore, as it was just said, both verbs and derived nominals share the very same selectional restrictions, as for instance in the case of the verb assassinate and its derived nominal assassination, where in both cases the assassinated person must be someone of importance, e.g. a statesman. The Greek counterpart, δολοφόνο, on the other hand, although it does not have this specific meaning, it is still not used for taking an animal’s life.

(4) a.** The police assassinated a cat
    b.** The police’s assassination of a cat

(4') a.=? i astinomía δολοφονίας mia γιάτα
    b.=? i δολοφονίας μιας γιατάς από την αστινομία

Following Chomsky’s insights, Kiparsky (1982) has formulated a morphological rule whereby affixes like -(t)ion, -ment, -ing, -ure etc. are lexically represented as N categories which can select a V stem and attach to it. The result of this attachment will be a derived nominal like the one in (5) below:

(5)

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  N(P)
 /\  /
 V  N
 |   |
 |   |
 express  ion
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Our analysis, which is mainly focused on 0-role and Case assignment in derived nominals, will be couched in a theoretical framework similar to that of Rappaport (1983), Grimshaw (1990), among others, in the sense that: (a) it will postulate an Argument Structure for certain nominals which is similar but not identical to that of verbs; (b) it will make a distinction between them, as far as their semantics is concerned which will be reflected in their syntactic structure,
and (c) it will be claimed that the so-called ‘subjects’ of nominals are, in fact, (Argument) Adjuncts, a term used by Grimshaw (1990) and Jackendoff (1990) to refer to an intermediate sort of function which has features of both arguments and adjuncts as, for instance, the by-phrase in passive (cf. Zubizarreta 1987, among others) [1].

2. VERBS AND NOMINALS IN ENGLISH

In English verbs and nominals appear to have some argument taking properties in common. Let’s consider the examples below, where there is a structural parallel between active construction of verbs and nominals, on the one hand, and passive construction on verbs and nominals, on the other:

(6) a. The squad executed the prisoners
   Agent (Subj) Patient (Obj)

   b. (The squad’s) execution of the prisoners
   (Nominal in active voice)
      Agent (Subj) Patient (Obj)

(7) a. The prisoners were executed (by the squad)
      (Verb in passive voice)
      Patient Agent (by-phrase)

   b. The execution of the prisoners (by the squad)
      (Nominal in passive voice)
      Patient Agent (by-phrase)

   c. The prisoners’ execution (by the squad)
      (Nominal in passive voice)
      Patient Agent (by-phrase)

   d. *The squad executed (ill-formed; the internal Patient argument is missing)

   e. *The squad’s execution (ill-formed for the same reason)

Both execute and execution share an identical argument structure, i.e. <Agent Patient> and, as it appears, they have a similar syntactic structure in the sense that the subjects and objects of the verbs may occupy identical positions in the nominal constructions: (6b) corresponds to (6a) while (7a and c) are ‘passive’ nominal constructions corresponding to the passive in (7a). However, in both (b) and (c) examples above, the Agent appears to be optional, just as it happens in the passive construction of the verb with the by-phrase. Thus, both in active and passive nominals, there seems to be a suppression of the external argument, ‘subject’, just as there is in the passives of the verbs and consequently, the argument corresponding to the subject of the active verb execute becomes optional, in the nominal construction (cf. Carrier and Randall 1992, Grimshaw 1990 and Jackendoff 1990).

Notice that a similar suppression of an internal argument, i.e. the object-Patient/Theme, is impossible not only in the verb’s argument structure (cf. 7d) but also the internal argument structure of the derived nominal (cf. 7e). The im-
possibility of having an internal argument suppressed in a derived nominal is a proof that it behaves just like a verb as far as internal arguments are concerned (cf. subcategorization, above) but not as far as external arguments are concerned. In the former case, as is well known, there is a tight bond between the verb and the internal argument (i.e. object) and this is in fact reflected in the syntactic structure of the verb, where a clause is traditionally divided into an NP, the external argument, and a VP, made up of the verb and the object NP(s), i.e. the internal argument(s), if the verb is transitive. The subject, on the other hand, has clearly a more independent status in the clause, hence the possibility of its drastically changing function in passive clauses where it becomes an optional by-phrasal, a chomeur “unemployed”, in Relational Grammar terminology.

3. MODERN GREEK NOMINALS

An examination of Modern Greek data will show that the same linguistic principles apply in the semantic and syntactic structure of verbs as well as that of nominals. We may claim that in English we have two constructs of nominals, namely, one corresponding to the active construction, i.e. The squad executed the prisoner → The squad’s execution of the prisoner, and another corresponding to the passive construction, i.e. The prisoner was executed by the squad → The prisoner’s execution by the squad. But as far as the MGte of those English sentences are concerned, we might contend that nominal formation is only possible after the verb has undergone obligatory passivization, given that a nominalization like the one in (8b) deriving from (8a) is impossible, whereas a nominalization like the one in (9b) deriving from the passive sentence in (9a) is perfect:

(8) a. to apospazma eksetelese ton exmalotu (Active Voice)
   The squad executed the prisoner

   b. *tu apospazmatos ektelesei tu exmalotu
      The squad’s execution of the prisoner

(9) a. o exmalotos ektelestike apo to apospazma (Passive Voice)
   The prisoner was executed by the squad

   b. i ektelesei tu exmalotu apo to apospazma
      The execution of the prisoner by the squad

Furthermore, we could claim that argument realization is the same in some respects since in both verbs and nominals there is some consistency between direct internal argument, on the one hand, and verb or nominal, on the other, given that we have witnessed: (a) the possibility of an external argument’s suppression in both languages, and (b) an internal argument constancy in the sense that in
both verbs and nominals in English, as well as in Modern Greek, this argument cannot be suppressed. In fact, we have seen that the presence of an external argument in nominals presupposes the presence of an internal argument but not vice versa, hence the claim that external arguments have an adjunct status. Below we will try to explain the ungrammaticality of (8b) (compared to the grammaticality of its English counterpart, e.g. The squad's execution of the prisoners).

4. CASE ASSIGNMENT IN ENGLISH AND GREEK NOMINALS

The Case assigned by English and Modern Greek nominals is the genitive. In recent analyses (cf. Chomsky 1986, among others) Case can be assigned by all four major categories, namely verbs, nouns, adjectives and prepositions. Another important aspect concerning Case is that Chomsky's theory as well as traditional grammarians (e.g. Kuryłowicz 1964) postulate two kinds of Cases, namely grammatical or structural Case (which in some languages like Greek, for example, can be explicitly manifested in the nominal morphology by an ending expressing, for instance, syntactic dependence of a noun on a verb) and semantic or inherent Case (i.e. a Case that is associated with the verb's theta roles rather than with its syntactic relation to a dependent element). As a rule, accusative is a structural Case whereas genitive is an inherent Case. We may, therefore, assume that nominals do not assign structural case and that they do not govern their complements in the way that verbs do. Notice that there is a distinction between Case assignment and Case realization, that is, a Case-marked NP can appear to the right of the head (e.g. 10a) or to the left (e.g. 10b) despite the fact that English, as a head-first language, should have the Case assigned to the right:

(10) a. The execution [of the prisoner]
    b. [The prisoner's] execution

The genitive Case in English is realized either by the mediation of the preposition of in the complement position, as in (10a), or the affixation of the possessive element 's in the subject position, as in (10b).

4.1. Case and Argument Structure in Derived Nominals

The distinction between structural Case, on the one hand, and inherent (lexical) Case, on the other, is reflected in the syntactic structure of verbs and nominals: the former assign accusative Case which is dissociated from thematic roles, and thus an NP may sometimes exceptionally receive accusative or nominative Case from the verb although it does not belong to its argument structure (cf. (11) prove and (12) appear, but also emfanizo 'show', 'appear' from Modern Greek):
(11) a. The press proved John to have embezzled enormous sums of money
   b. John was proved to have embezzled enormous sums of money
   c. *John's proof to have embezzled enormous sums of money

(12) a. Ed appears to have stolen the money
   b. *Ed's appearance to have stolen the money

Like English, Greek is unable to assign Case to nouns where there is no argument relation between verb and noun. This is actually the case with the verb emfaniz-0 (Mediopassive: emfaniz-ome).

Both the verb prove and the verb appear assign accusative and nominative Case to John and Ed, respectively, which are argument NPs that do not belong to the argument structure of these verbs. In fact those two NPs are arguments of the verbs in the complement clauses, namely embezzle and steal, respectively. They have been raised, however, from their subject position in the complement clause to become objects of the matrix verb from which they get their accusative Case [2]. Similar raising cannot occur with the derived nominals in (11c) and (12b) where genitive Case is assigned (John's and Ed's), given that the genitive Case assigned by the nominals is an inherent (lexical) Case closely related to semantic roles and neither in (11c) nor in (12b) is there any association between a semantic role that the genitive NPs bear and the derived nominals; as in the case of (11a) and (12a), the two genitive NPs belong with the argument structure of the complement clause verbs and not with that of the nominals.

Coming back to the Greek verb, the active form emfanizo 'show' exhibits a behaviour of 'raising' or Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) verb just like the verbs telo 'want' and perimenoe 'expect' (cf. Kakouriotis 1980). Such verbs do not undergo the process of nominalization (cf. 12'):

(11') a. emfanizun ton koskota na exi klepsi ola ta lefita (active form)
   'They show koskotas to have stolen all the money'
   b. O koskotas emfanizete na exi klepsi ola ta lefita (passive form)
   'koskotas appears to have stolen all the money' (mediopassive form)

(12') *I emfanisi tu jani na exi klepsi ola ta lefita
   'The appearance of Koskotas to have stolen all the money' (nominal)

This strong connexion between Case assignment and semantic roles that we see in derived nominals underscores a significant difference between them and the verbs they derive from, which was pointed out by many scholars (cf. Rappaport 1983 and Zubizarreta 1987, among others) namely that the relation between lexico-semantic structure and syntactic structure is less transparent in the verbs than it is in the derived nominals in the sense that the latter do not allow com-
plements that bear no semantic relation to the nominals, that is, in neither English nor Modern Greek appear to allow ‘raised’ NPs [2].

5. PROCESS/EVENT NOMINALS VS. RESULT NOMINALS:
A SEMANTIC DISTINCTION
Nominals can be divided into those that exhibit verbal behaviour and those that do not. The former normally have an argument structure, just like verbs, when they denote a process or an event; the latter, on the other hand, do not have an argument structure and they normally denote the result of a process or event which may be a concrete or an abstract object (cf. Zubizarreta 1987, Grimshaw 1990, and for Modern Greek, Triandafyllidis 1941). The nominals that inherit aspectual properties from the verb they are derived from, i.e. properties expressing an on-going process, are in fact the nominals that have an argument structure just like their corresponding verbs; it is actually those nominals that must observe the direct argument constancy. We can illustrate the difference between a process/event nominal with inherited aspecual properties and a result nominal without any aspectual properties by using for example the nominal expression and the MGte ekfrasi. Compare (13) with (14) in that respect and observe that a processual nominal is compatible with aspectual adjectives, like frequent, constant and continual, given that its argument structure is composed not only of semantic roles but also of aspectual parameters, whereas a result nominal is not structured in a similar fashion:

(13) a. The (continual) expression of feelings of gratitude is annoying
   a’. I (sinexis) ekfrasi esθimaton evynomosinisi ine enoxlitiki
   b. *The (continual) expression is annoying
   b’. *I sinexis ekfrasi ine enoxlitiki
   c. They continually express feelings of gratitude
   c’. afi sinexis ekfrazun esθimata evynomosinisi
   d. *They continually express
   d’. *afi sinexis ekfrazun (incorrect subcategorization)

(14) a. The expression on his face
   a’. I ekfrasi sto prosopo tu
   b. *The continual expression on his face
   b’. *I sinexis ekfrasi sto prosopo tu

In (13a) the nominal has a process/event reading and the possibility of inserting an aspectual adjective like continual shows that the nominal has been given a processual (i.e. non-result) interpretation. In such a case the internal argument constancy (i.e. occurrence of an ‘object’) will be observed and thus the post-
Head complement, i.e. feelings of gratitude, is indispensible. In fact, the nominal inherits the aspectual structure of the verb (cf. 13c and 13c'). On the other hand, (14b) and (14b') are out because they have an aspectual adjective but lack the appropriate argument structure with the non-suppressible internal argument that characterizes process/event nominals; instead, they refer to the result of a process, i.e. the expression on his face simply means ‘the look on his face’ and thus the aspectual adjective does not fit in.

From the data we have discussed in this section we may infer that argument structure is composed of both argument role analyses as well as aspectual analyses of verbs or nominals that behave like verbs. In the following section we will try to elaborate on the distinction between processual nominals and result nominals and also to account for the difference between English and Modern Greek so long as this difference between the two languages is related to this semantic distinction.

6. EXTENDING THE ANALYSIS

In the present section we will offer some more data with pre-head adjectival pronouns (cf.15 a-c) and (16 a-c) and also some data with post-head genitive possessive enclitics (cf. 15 a'-c' and 16 a'-c'):

(15) a. i ðiki mu periγrafi
    the my own description
   ‘My description’
   a'. i periγrafi mu
    the description of-me
    ‘My description’
  b. i ðiki tu metafrasi
    the his/its own translation
   ‘His translation’
   b'. i metafrasi tu
    the translation of-his
   ‘His translation’
  c. i ðiki tus erminia
    the their own interpretation
   ‘Their interpretation’
   c'. i erminia tus
    the interpretation of-them
   ‘Their interpretation’

(16) a. i ðiki mu eksoloγrefsi
    the my own extermination
   ‘My extermination’
   a'. i eksoloγrefsi mu
    the extermination of-me
    ‘My extermination’
  b. i ðiki tu katastrofi
    the his/its own destruction
   ‘His destruction’
   b'. i katastrofi tu
    the destruction of-his
   ‘His destruction’
  c. i ðiki mas silipsi
    the our own capture/arrest
   ‘Our capture/arrest’
   c'. i silipsi mas
    the arrest/capture of-us
   ‘Our arrest/capture’
In (15 a-c) and (15 a'-c') both the adjectival pronoun and the post-head genitive possessive enclitic make the nominal ambiguous because it may refer to either the external (Agent) argument or to the internal (Patient/Theme) argument. Thus, (15 a and a') have one reading in which I (as Agent) have described somebody or something and another reading in which somebody has described me (a Theme). Similarly in (15 b and b') i δίκη tu may refer to someone who has done the translation (=Agent) or, to the translated text (=Theme); and the same applies to (15 c and c'): the adjectival pronoun may either refer to the Agent or to the Patient/Theme argument. Note that we can witness the same ambiguity in English, in all the examples of (15).

Now, as far as (16 a-c and a'-c') are concerned, however, there is only one possible interpretation, namely, the one in which the adjectival pronoun refers to a Patient/Theme argument, that is, the internal argument of the base verb. Thus, my extermination/i δίκη μου eksolofrefsi cannot mean that 'I have exterminated someone or something', that is, the adjectival pronouns cannot function as external arguments, unlike the adjectival pronouns and the possessive clitics in the second column of (15), which can have this option.

Now in order to account for the difference between English and Modern Greek we must take a more careful look at genitive NPs and draw a distinction between true possessive genitive NPs, that is NPs that actually bear a Possessor role denoting possession and/or creation (cf. Gruber's 1965 Possessional Location), and other genitive NPs that bear no Possessor role. It will be seen, then, that the difference between the two languages has to do with the multifunctional status of the pre-head 's genitive NP and the corresponding possessive adjective, i.e. my, your, his, her, etc. in English. Compare, first, (17) which is grammatical in English with its ungrammatical MGte (17') and then compare them with (18) and (18'):

(17) Our/John's extermination of wild animals
(17)a. *i δίκη mas/*tu jani eksolofrefsi ton ayrion zoon
   b. *i eksolofrefsi mas ton ayrion zoon
   'Our extermination of wild animals'
(18) Our/John's description of wild animals
(18)a. i δίκη mas/*tu jani periýrafi ton ayrion zoon
   b. i periýrafi mas ton ayrion zoon
   'Our description of wild animals'

As was pointed out above, pre-head NPs are not allowed in Modern Greek; thus, the genitive NP tu jani, 'John's', is disallowed in both (17') and (18'). On
the other hand, however, we pointed out that adjectives or adjectival pronouns are possible in pre-head (‘subjective’) positions (cf. the grammaticality of *i δίκη μασ μεριφατι τον αυριον ζοον, ‘Our description of wild animals’ in 18’). But (17) is ungrammatical even with a possessive adjectival pronoun like *i δίκη μασ, why? We have just said that the pre-head position occupied by an’s genitive NP or an adjectival pronoun in English has more functions than its Greek counterpart. As Zubizarreta (1987) points out, it may bear: (a) a Possessor and/or Creator role, as in Mary’s book, where Mary may be the owner of the book, the creator of the book, or both; (b) it may be occupied by a genitive NP with an adjunct function, as in Yesterday’s execution of the prisoner by the squad; (c) it may bear the role of an Agent in a nominal with an argument structure as in The squad’s execution of the prisoner which in Greek does not obtain; (d) it may bear the role of the Patient in a nominal with an argument structure, as in The prisoner’s execution by the squad, where the internal argument can occupy a pre-head position provided that it denotes an affected entity (cf. Doron and Rappaport 1991).

Coming now to Modern Greek and considering the functions of the adjectival pronoun o δίκος μου, which normally occupies pre-head (i.e. prenominal) position, and to the genitive possessive clitic *μου ‘of me’ which occupies postnominal position, we notice that such possessives have a rather more limited scope. More specifically, they can bear a Patient/Theme role when they refer to internal arguments of event nominals and also they can bear only an external Possessor/Creator role when they refer to result nominals; this is not the case when they refer to event nominals, given that events are not compatible with Possessor roles, hence the ungrammaticality of (17’a and b). In sum both adjectival pronouns and possessive clitics in Modern Greek normally function as internal arguments of event nominals deriving from monotransitive base verbs or, as external arguments of result nominals from monotransitive verbs. Intuitively speaking, one can be the possessor/creator of a translation or of an adaptation (of a play) in cases when both these nominals express the result of a process; but one cannot be the possessor of a destruction, an extermination or an execution. Intuitions, however, are not always adequate enough to provide conclusive evidence in a linguistic analysis, unless they are bolstered up with relevant syntactic justification. A way to exhibit the incompatibility of the Possessor role with an event nominal is the use of a copula. As Grimshaw (1990) has pointed out, arguments of event nominals cannot be separated from their heads by copulas; only external arguments associated with result nominals can. Copulas normally express predication relations and not argument structure relations. Compare, for instance, The pencil is John’s with *The departure is John’s as well as their
Modern Greek counterparts to molivi ine tu Jani vs. *I anaxorisi ine tu Jani. Thus, in both English and Modern Greek nominals, separation by copula is possible only in relation to an external argument of the verb the nominal derives from; that is, separation by copula, i.e. be (and its MGte ine), cannot affect internal argument constancy which is associated with event readings:

(19) a. * The extermination is of wild animals (event and internal argument)
   a'. I eksondoi ine ton ayrion zoon
   b. * The extermination is of the hunters (event and external argument)
   b'. I eksondoi ine ton kiniyon
   c. The translation is Mary's (result and external argument)
   c'. I metafrasi ine tis Marias
   d. *The translation is of the book (event or result and internal argument)
   d'. *I metafrasi ine tu vivliu

(19 a, b and d) are ungrammatical given that extermination has unambiguously an event reading (example (d) however 'translation' has also a result meaning). This is proved by the fact that they observe the direct argument constancy and the fact that - at least, as far as Modern Greek is concerned - a genitive NP is disallowed, given that these NPs can only bear possessor roles in a result nominal or a Patient/Theme role when they refer to internal arguments of event nominals; however, they cannot function as external arguments of event nominals. Additional proof is provided by some pure event non-concrete nominals which cannot appear as [+count] in neither English nor Modern Greek. Compare (20a and its MGte 20'a):

(20) a. * one, two, three, many exterminations
   b. one, two, three, many translations
   a'. mia, dio, tris, poleis eksondoi
   b'. mia, dio, tris, poleis metafrasi

This last argument does not apply to all the nominals that we have described as process/event nominals, however. For instance we can say one, two, three, many executions and, in the case of Modern Greek mia, dio, tris, poleis ektelesis. Moreover, there are some differences across languages; thus, although many destructions is ungrammatical in English, its MGte poleis katastrofes is perfect in Modern Greek. It appears that factors that have to do with Lexical Conceptual Structure and with (contrastive) pragmatics may determine the acceptability in such cases. Although it is obvious that more research needs to be done in this direction, I will not pursue this subject any further in this paper. For some discussion concerning this topic, see Zubizarreta (1987).
We now come to an interesting question concerning differences between English and Modern Greek. We have seen that in result nominals not only an adjectival pronoun is possible in pre-head position but also a genitive possessive clitic in post-head position (cf. *i períyrafi mas* ‘our description’). But is it possible for a second full genitive NP to occupy post-head position, too? Horrocks and Stavrou (1987) assume that there is only a single post-head genitival slot available in Modern Greek NPs. This seems to be a wrong assumption, however, given that the possibility of two post-head genitival NPs depends on the semantic distinction process/event vs. result nominals: the former do not allow it, the latter do. For example:

(21) * i ektelesi ton exmaloton tu apospazimatos

‘The squad’s execution of the prisoners’

*Ektelesi* and *execution* are process/event nominals and as such disallow a genitive NP external argument in their slot; in addition, an event nominal like *execution* has an [Agent, Patient] argument structure, which means that the Agent (external) argument will appear headed by an apo-phrase after the verb has undergone obligatory passivization. Consider, however, the data below with the four result nominals, namely *metafrasi* ‘translation’, *διασκεviei* ‘adaptation’, * períyrafi* ‘description’, and *erminia* ‘interpretation’, where two genitival post-head NPs are possible [3]:

(22) a. *i metafrasi tu δον kixotι tu karθeue*

the translation the Don Quixote the Karθeos

‘Karθeos’ translation of Don Quixote’

b. *i kinimatografιki διαskεviei tu makveθ tu roman polanski*

‘Polanski’s film adaptation of Macbeth’

c. *i períyrafi tu poðosferiku aýona tu jani δjakojani*

‘Janis δjakojanis’ description of the football match’

d. *i erminia tu oθelu tu lorenς olivie*

‘Lawrence Olivier’s interpretation of Othello’

It is of vital importance here to point out that the nominals, as used in (22), have clearly a result reading which allows them to disregard internal argument constancy, and to occur with an optional external argument/adjunct and no internal argument, as witness:

(23) a. *i metafrasi tu karθeue*

‘Karθeos’ translation’

b. *i kinimatografιki διαskεviei tu roman polanski*

‘Polanski’s film adaptation’
c. i periýrafi tu jani δjakojani  
‘Janis δjakojani’s description’

d. i erminia tu Lorens Olivie  
‘Lawrence Olivier’s interpretation’

However, nominals like those above may also describe a process/event. In such a case, however, internal argument constancy must be observed, otherwise the sentence will be ungrammatical. Compare below:

(24) a. i sixni metafrasi tu δon kixoti loyo tis δimotikotitas tu vivliu (event reading)  
‘Don Quixote’s frequent translation due to the popularity of the book’

b. * i sixni metafrasi tu karθeu (result reading)  
‘Karθeos’ frequent translation’

The nominal metafrasi here may refer to the result of a process which is eventually printed as a book; in such a case no aspectual adjective like sixni ‘frequent’ can modify the nominal as the genitival NP bears the Possessor/Creator role. In that case the nominal lacks an argument structure and there is no internal argument constancy, which means that the result nominal structure i metafrasi tu Karθeu ‘Karθeo’s translation’ with the genitive NP tu Karθeu as an external argument is perfect. But the same nominal may also refer to the process itself (not the concrete result that eventually took the form of a book) where the aspectual adjective is absolutely compatible with the nominal and in that case internal argument constancy must be strictly observed (cf. the ungrammaticality of (24b) which lacks an internal argument). Note, in passing, that (24b) can have a grammatical reading in case the post-head genitive NP is not the translator but the author translated.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present paper has been to consider whether there is an isomorphism between the semantico-syntactic structure of the verbs and that of the derived nominals in English and Modern Greek and also to account for differences between English and Modern Greek nominals. It has been observed that nominals are distinguished into those that behave more or less like verbs in that both verbs and nominals suppress the external argument in the passive, and into those that do not behave like verbs but rather like concrete nouns. Nominals that can suppress external arguments but observe internal argument constancy are described as process/event nominals and exhibit a verbal behaviour. On the other hand, nominals that do not observe internal argument constancy and in general do not exhibit verbal behaviour are described as result nominals.
Now as far as the differences between English and Modern English are concerned, we have observed that in the first place, English but not Modern Greek can generate genitive NPs in the prenominal position. Modern Greek, on the other hand, can generate nouns and adjectival pronouns in that position with some verbs of the describe type, where the agent occupies end position, e.g. I metafrași tu δον κίστιν tu karbèn, and bears the external argument role of the Agent in Modern Greek nominals. Particular mention should be made to the Greek adjectival pronouns and their corresponding post-nominal possessive clitics which have a complex function. In event nominals they may refer to internal argument, just as it happens with their English counterparts, e.g. our destruction, and its MGte i δίκι μας katastrofi, but they cannot refer to the external argument if there are two arguments present, as it can happen in an English construction like Our/The barbarians’ destruction of the city, for instance, which is perfect in that language, unlike its MGte * i δίκι μας/τον varvaron katastrofi tis polis (or * i katastrofi mas tis polis) which is out in Modern Greek [4]. This is so because neither the genitive NP nor the genitive adjectival pronoun or the genitive possessive clitic in Modern Greek is capable of bearing the role of the Agent in an event nominal if there is another genitive NP in the argument structure; the Agent role in such a case has to be introduced by an apo-phrase, i.e. i katastrofi tis polis apo tuς varvai ‘The city’s destruction by the barbarians’. In other words in Modern Greek an event nominal has the structure of a ‘passive’ nominal, unless, of course, the Agent appears as an adjective (not an adjectival pronoun) as in i iatriki eksetasi tu abliti ‘The doctor’s (i.e. the medical) examination of the athlete’.

Notice, however, that whereas an event *i δίκι μας katastrofi tis polis/i katastrofi mas tis polis ‘Our destruction of the city’ is ungrammatical, as we have already mentioned, a result nominal, like i δίκι μου metafrași tu prust/i metafrași mu tu prust ‘my translation of Proust’ is perfect. This is so because of the compatibility of a result nominal with the Possessor role born by the adjectival pronoun or the genitive possessive clitic. The same analysis can be extended to cover full genitive NPs as far as result nominals are concerned. Thus, although in the case of process/event nominals two post-head genitive NPs are strictly prohibited, result nominals with two post-head genitives are permissible. Compare in that respect the ungrammatical event nominal *i ektelési tu exmalotu tu apospazmatos ‘The squad’s execution of the prisoner’ with the grammatical result nominal i erminia tu Odélu tu Lorenz Olivier ‘Laurence Olivier’s interpretation of Othello’.

However, even in such cases, there seems to be a sort of ‘Strict Adjacency Principle’ that supports the internal argument constancy. Thus an NP like *? I
erminia tu Lorens Olivier tu Obelu is ungrammatical because it does not observe this principle.

ENDNOTES

[1] It is useful here to draw a distinction in connection with nominals between a (grammatical) argument role, which is part of the argument structure, and a semantic role, which is of a cognitive nature and denotes a participant but has no syntactic status. Take for example the word thief and its MGte klefis. The former has no appropriate affix to carry a semantic role whereas the latter has: the -tis affix of the Greek Agentive nominal is the MGte equivalent of -er in English, e.g. maker ‘kataskevastis’, seller ‘politis’, buyer ‘ayorastis’. Thus, although a word like thief may have from a cognitive point of view an Agent participant and Theme participant, a nominal phrase like *thief of bicycles is ungrammatical in English whereas its MGte klefis polilaton is OK. Semantically, there is nothing wrong with the English phrase but it cannot afford a grammatical argument because it cannot license it, unlike its MGte which it can, given that the morphosyntactic marker of the grammatical argument, the -er affix is absent in thief, whereas in the Modern Greek counterpart, the -tis affix (the Greek counterpart of -er) is present in klefis.

[2] Recent analyses within the GB theoretical framework have claimed that there is no Subject-to-Object Raising but rather ‘Exceptional Case Marking’ in the object of expect in I expect him to tell me the truth. The issue is far from settled and I adopt the traditional view of raising. For more on the issue, see Postal (1974) and Kakouriotis (1980).

[3] For some speakers, nominals followed by two genitives may sound a bit awkward. This is so because genitive sounds formal and somehow ‘wooden’ and an apo-phrase is preferable. This does not mean that these nominals are ungrammatical, of course.

[4] It appears that a nominal like ektelesi ‘execution’ in the plural behaves as if it lacked argument structure given that it does not observe internal argument constancy. Thus an NP like I ektelesi ton gormanon is ambiguous: the genitive may refer to either the Patient or the Agent, whereas in the singular I ektelesi tu gormanu the genitive unambiguously refers to the Patient role.

REFERENCES


